

[Mrs. Margaret Davis]

ORIGINAL AND UNEDITED CONTINUITY

(LIFE HISTORY)

GRACE MCCUNE

December 9, 1438

Mrs. Margaret Davis

193 Nacoochee Ave.

Athens, Georgia

As you go up a long flight of steps to the tailor shop, you end up in a long dark hallway, where a light is kept burning all the time, so that visitors and customers can see how to find the doors.

A knock on the door and a very friendly voice said, "come in." The room at the top of the steps is the sewing room, and has two long tables that are used for cutting, and marking clothes for alterations. A long rack at one end of the room was hanging full of clothes that were finished. A smaller table between two large windows had a machine on each side, one was an electric machine, but the other was just the old kind with a foot treadle.

A [heater?] at one side of the room heats up the room, and several chairs were placed around it for visitors as well as customers.

Mrs. Davis is a large, dark headed, and a very pleasant and friendly woman. She was busy with several men from the different dry cleaning places, and they had large bundles

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of clothes to be [repaired?]. Mrs. Davis asked the visitor to have a seat that she would be through in a few minutes. After the customers were gone, and the Negro boy, Ed, had fixed up the fire, and gone back to the room where he does all the pressing, Mrs. Davis 2 said, "did you think I would never get through with them? It is that way all during the day, but that is where most of the business comes from now, for I don't get as much from the stores as I used to but business is not good as it should be for this time of the year. I have all that I 'can do now, and I don't take but very few things to make since I have been running the shop by myself, for I don't have time.

"But all this is not interesting to you, I know." But when the visitor explained that she would like to get a story from her, she laughed and said, ["I?"] do not think that my story would be interesting to anyone, as I guess it is just like most any ones, I have had my troubles and pleasures like most everyone does, but if you care for it, I will do the best I can, if you care to listen while I work, I like to talk, and I do get lonesome by myself, as I do not have any help except on busy days.

"I was born in Clarke County, on my Grandffather Grandfather William Summer's place, November 18, 1887, out near where Princeton is now, in a small two-room log house. When I was still a baby, we moved to the paper mill, now called the Cord Mill, but the old paper mill building is still standing, but in too bad a condition to be used for anything now.

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"My father and Jerome Wallace were the two men that run the paper machines or "enjines" as they called them then. Of course, they had helpers, but one of them had to be on duty all this time. If one of them was sick, or off for any reason, the other one had to stay on the job until the one that was off duty returned. Miss Mag Hale was the only woman that they used in that part of the mill and she counted the paper. It was made in large square sheets ready for the printers.

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“Old Man Bishop was the man that run the finishing machine. I have watched them work many a time when I was a child for it was all so interesting to see the [machines?] run. Out from the paper mill was the rag room, where the rags were sorted out and put in different bins. Each color was put into a separate bin to itself. They bought old clothes and rags to make the paper, and all the buttons were cut off and they sure watched out for that, for the button would ruin the machines.

“When I was six years old, I was sent to school. It was not like the schools are now. School then was in the Old Hall, and was all in one room. Miss Sally Ward was the teacher, and we didn't have but one teacher for all the children, and she had about one hundred, all sizes and ages, from six years up, and some of them were 4 almost grown. Our books then were the Old Blue Back Speller, [arithmetic?], and geography. We sure had to study, but even at that [we?] had lots fun and good times in that old schoolhouse which in later years was made into a dwelling house, and is, I believe, still standing at this time.

“It was a great thing for the children to work at the paper mill after we were out of school. They were glad to have us to. Our job was sorting out the rags. We enjoyed this work, and they paid us fifty cents (50¢) a month, and that was a lots of money to us, but it wouldn't be much to kids these days. People from all 'round sold their old clothes and rags at the paper mill. Many times we found nickles and sometimes dimes in bags of rags. They allowed us to keep the money when we found it that way, and we would buy candy and have a big time.

“And one day, I sure do remember that time, as I think, pleasures and disappointments in our childhood days, are better remembered than anything else, we found a large bag of new clothes, and they were nice ones to dress for women and children, underwear, stockings, and some shirts, we dressed ourselves up, and we put these things aside, for we wanted to keep them. But the very next morning a woman from [?] was out there

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hunting her clothes. Her maid had sold them and kept the money, and as the old saying goes 'our feathers fell,' for we had to give up all our pretty dresses that we had put aside.

"About this time they put in a bag machine to make paper bags. The machine would cut a hundred bags at a time, and was a great curiosity to the folks back then. The bags were folded, and put up in bundles, two hundred bags to a bundle. This was another job that we kids could do. It was fun to do this. We folded half of them one way and half another way, and tied up the bundles.

"They also used jute to make paper, and this was bought in large bales. That was another job for us to [do?], for we could tare the jute up in small pieces to have it ready for the machines. One day we found a lot of paper money in one of the bales of jute, but two of the women that worked there took this money, and said they would have to send it back. But folks said that they kept all the money and bought them a home with it. Of course, I don't know if that was right or not, but we [id?] know that we didn't get any of it.

"Did you know that they made paper out of wood even in those days? Well they did, I don't remember what kind of wood it was, but they ground small sappling into a pulp ready for the paper machines. The paper that was made from wood was a heavy brown paper such as they use for wrapping paper, and was called manila paper.

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"People was paid once a month then for their work, and it was the usual thing then, for them to buy a months supply of provisions at that time at the company store. All the men liked their tobacco, and this was one supply that was not forgotten when groceries were bought. It was something they felt like they could not do without. And kids would slip tobacco out and chew it, the boys especially. One day some of the kids swiped some of their dads tobacco, and told me I would have to hide it for them, and I had better put it some place, where it would not be found. I decided that on the [sills?] in the top of the old well would be the best place. I had to climb to reach the sills, but I made it, and laid

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the tobacco along the sills. It started to raining that same night and rained for a week. After the rain was over, the kids told me to get their tobacco for them. I went to the old well to get it, the rain had come through the holes in the roof and soaked the tobacco, and it had swelled until it was as thick again as it should have been, and ruined. I almost got a whipping from that crowd of kids, but they chewed it, and of course was sick, every blessed one of them. No, I didn't chew any, for I knew mama would sure tan my hide.

"I had some older sisters and our house was just a gathering place for the young folks. There was a crowd of them there most all the time, and I could get the 7 biggest biggest thrill out of watching and listening to them talk. One night two girls, Jule Lee and Gertrude Richards, came to our house to set a dumb supper. I was just about seven then, and I cried because they put me to bed, for they had these suppers at midnight, just on the stroke of twelve. They started their supper and one of my sisters and Cordellia Noells put on pants and was going to scare them. I could hear them talking, for I wasn't asleep, if I [was?] in bed, and I slipped up and told one of my uncles what they was doing, and it was a disgrace in those days for girls to dress up like boys. So he said he would fix them, and when my sister and the other girl slipped out to go around to the kitchen to scare the other girls, my uncle got after them, and did they holler, but any way it broke up the supper, and I was satisfied.

"Didn't you ever hear about them old time dumb suppers? They were very popular back in them days. That was the way girls found out who their future husband would be. I know it [seems?] funny now, to look back on times as they were then, but after all I think [people?] really enjoyed life more then than they do now. There was not so many places to go, and people were closer together in every way, but I will [try?] to tell you how they cooked the suppers.

"Two girls did the cooking, set the table, and each one used their right hand, everything was done backwards, even to making the bread. They did everything together, 8 they only used one hand, and could not speak, not one word from the time they started, until it

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was over. If they [did?], the spell was broken and no one would come. Everything must be ready just at twelve, the table set for four and also on the table was placed a Bible and a pint bottle. Then the wind was suppose to blow and the [doors?] come open, so that the men could walk in and eat. They [were?] not supposed to speak either just [eat?] and walk out, [if?] they [picked?] up the Bible, then they would make a good husband, but [beware?] of the man that moved the bottle for you would sure get a man that would turn out bad and be a drunkard sure. If no one came into [?], then you was doomed to die an old maid. These [suppers?] were lots of fun, for most times, the girls would set scared and wake everybody in the house up. Oh, yes, they had to be [the?] only two people up in the house, but they were good old days.

“[low?] as it is ‘most Christmas time, I’m going to [tell?] you about one Christmas when I was still a little [girl?]. For Christmas then lasted a week, from Christmas [Eve?], ‘til New Years Eve. On this Christmas, mama was looking for her half-sister, and family from Alabama to [spend?] Christmas [with?] us. [We?] had never seen them and were looking forward to [that?] visit, and was having a big [supper?] on Christmas Eve night, also a dance. We kids were just on tip toes, so excited, just couldn’t wait. Of course, we were also looking for Santa [Claus?].

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Our tree was all ready. Mama had killed turkeys, chickens, and had cooked cakes and pies for two weeks. But at last they came, now child, I am going to tell you this, just as I remember it, and I / don’t know if you will care to use it or not, but we have had many laughs over this Christmas, so many years ago. My aunt and uncle got here several [days?] before the children did. They did not have enough money for all them to ride. So they started the children on days before they left, walking part of the way and riding most of the way with some of their friends. The two girls and one boy got in on Christmas Eve, and if they wasn’t a sight, one of the girls weighed over two hundred pounds, and had walked the soles off her shoes.

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"All of our folks and lots of our friends were there, [and?] one of mama's [?], who had married a man named [Stencile?], also one of my uncles and his daughter. They were to furnish the music for the dane dance , for they both played fiddles. Everything was cleared out of two rooms for dancing. [About?] three o'clock in the [afternoon?], the young folks started the dance. We kids were happy for we could watch them long as we wanted, didn't have to go to bed on Christmas.

"The older women were busy cooking and getting the supper [ready?], [everybody?] [was?] [having?] good time, the man calling for the dance would holler, 'swing your partner.'

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Oh, it was a grand time, and yet happy as we were, we kids were so interested in the fat girl from Alabama, that we stayed pretty close around her. She did not seem to want to dance, and we could not understand that. When we saw one of the young men start toward her, we just had to hear what he said. He asked her if she would dance the next set with [him?]. We held our breath for her answer, and this is what she said, 'I had [jest?] as leif lief dance with you as anybody else, but I has walked all the way from Alabamy to see Aunt Sis, and am too tired and gaulded galleded from walking to dance with anybody.

"About five o'clock the supper started, for there was eight tables full, besides the kids like me. [We?] had to [wait?] until the grown folks had all [eat?] before we were [allowed?] to go to the table. And how we watched that table. The man Stencile went to the first table, and , Honey , that man stayed there with all eight tables. I never have seen no one person eat as much in all my life. Of course, there was plenty to eat, but we was so afraid that he would eat it all, and as the last table finished eating, [he?] reached over and took the last piece of turkey. I never wanted to say something as bad as I did then, but I knew better, and with all we had to eat, we couldn't enjoy it for thinking of that last piece of turkey.

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"The dance [lasted?] all night. Of course, we kids had to give it up and go to bed after midnight, but we were up for the breakfast early on [Christmas?] morning and to see what Santa had left. There was not so many things for children to get then, as they have now, but we got many nice things. When it was time for dinner, mama put some turkey aside for us kids, and I guess it was a good thing for [Stancile?] was there. But that was the way we spent our Christmas then, [eating?] and dancing, and parties all through the week. But after New Years it was all over, and it was back to school and work.

"I had just about finished school there when the old Paper Mill closed down. We moved to Athens, near the old [?]check[?], which is on Broad Street. We went to work in the mill. I still remember that old mill very well. It had large [posts?] all through it. One day my sister was leaning against one of these post resting. One of the women saw her, and thinking that she would have some fun, she yelled out at her to move quick. It scared my sister, and she jumped catching her hair on a nail in the post, and pulled a handful of her hair out. Of course everybody laughed, but it made me so mad, I hit her so hard that she fell in the floor. We were new folks in the settlement, and were in for a lot of teasing, but [after?] that day they did not tease us any more. We were soon well satisfied 12 there, and had the same good times there as we did in our old home.

"Just when I was thinking that I was [grown?], I was visiting my sister, and it was there that I met my present husband. He came to see my brother-in-law, and had the prettiest horse and [buggy?]. He carried me to ride, but we just went down the road not far enough to even get out of sight of the house, but even at that mama heard about it. She didn't believe much in whipping, but she sure could find other ways of punishing, and just for that little short ride, I had to stay home for three long months. I mean I was not even allowed to go to [church?] and Sundayschool.

"I had a girl friend that I used to spend the night with real often, and she would visit me also. One night when I was spending the night with her, her father and mother were off visiting their people and there was just the children at home. Of course, she had brothers

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and sisters much older than we were, but we decided that when everybody got to sleep that we would get up and set us a dumb supper, for we had always wanted to, and they would tell us that we were too little. Sure enough, after everybody was in bed, we got up, yes we were scared, but was just going to show them that we could do it as well as they, and we did get the supper ready. We didn't even forget the bottle and 13 Bible. Two boys that knew us had been fishing and was on their way home, seeing the light in the kitchen, they thought someone was sick, and decided they had better stop and see if [there?] was anything that they could do, but when they saw us through the window, and knew what we were doing, they just pushed opened the door, walked in, [picked?] up the bottle and walked out. [Well?], we were scared stiff, couldn't move or speak, for sometime, but when we did get to where we could yell it wasn't long until everything in the house was up. That was my first and only time to try to set a dumb supper, but strange as it may seem, one of those boys is now my husband, and my girl [friend?] married the other one.

"I was married the first time when I was just about sixteen. [We?] used to have big pionies, everybody would go, and [we " ?] in tally-hos filled with straw. There was most times a ball game, after we had finished dinner. That is where I met my first husband, at one of these picnic. It was Just a short time after we met, that we went with a large crowd of boys and girls to the old Beaverdam Church to one of their footwashings. After that was over we went over to the Jim Smith place and one of the guards showed us all around. There was so many prisoners there, some crippled up in different ways, some with one arm, and some had one leg gone, but they all had to work. It was the way on that page 11 me and one of my sisters to go with him to the show. In thise days it didn't cost but five and ten cents to 14 Frank asked me to [marry?] him, and in about three months we were [married?].

"We went to housekeeping, and lived a very happy life until he died in 1907. After he passed away, I went back home to stay with mama and daddy, but I was blue and

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discouraged. I decided that I would go to work, and see if that would help me. I went to work in the Climax Hosiery mill, and worked there for [several?] months.

“Mr. Head [started?] a tailor shop in town and I went to work for him in 1908. I had not ever done any of this kind of work then and I don't think any of the others had either. But he got two Bohemians to learn us the tailor trade, and that is how I learned to be a tailor. I worked there for five years when I went into business with Mrs. Sally Baughoum.

“One day as I was walking up Broad Street who should I meet, but the boy that come to my dumb supper. He had married also, but he had lost his wife, not so very long after my husband died, and that meeting was the beginning of a friendship that later ended in marriage. He was then, and still is a great teaser. He enjoys playing jokes on me. One night he came down to see me and asked me and one of my sisters to go to the show with him. Shows were only five and ten cents then. Well, when we were almost there, he told us, that 15 we could go in and that he would wait on the outside, as he did not have enough money for all of us.

“I was [embarrassed?] and said we would just go back home. He insisted that we go on, but I got [mad?] and told him that I could pay my own way. My sister just laughed, it seemed as if she could tell that he was teasing. So she told him to just give her her dime, and she would buy peanuts and candy. We went on to the show. Oh, yes, he went too, but I was so mad, I couldn't enjoy it. He and my sister still tease me about going to the picture show, but I wouldn't let him come to see me again for a long time after that. One night when one of my sisters was fixing to get [married?], he came walking in, told mama that it would be a double wedding for he was going to marry me that night also. I [quarreled?] and fussed, told them that it wasn't so, that I did not ever intend to marry him, but the more I fussed, the more he laughed. He had everybody there [believing?] him, until the wedding was over. But he won out and in 1913 we were married.

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"[He?] has his [barber?] shop, and I have my tailor shop. [We?] have no children, no one but ourselves. When we married we bought a home on Nacoochee ave., and we are still living there. [We?] have a nice little home, and some /lovely flowers but he does most of the work with them.

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I don't have much time to work at anything at home.

Mrs. [Baughoum?] and I went into business upstairs on Clayton [Street?], but in a short time we moved down here on Jackson Street, and have been here ever since. I have run the shop by myself since Sally passed away last year. But it is lonesome without her, for we were together so long. I have three rooms, this is my work room, and the next room is the dressing room. There is a large mirror, and a table and some chairs in there, and sometimes people come in and wait in there, while I fix their clothes. The last room is the pressing room, and [d?] looks after that for me. I don't know hardly what I would do without [d?]. He has been with me so long that he knows just how I want everything done.

"I know that I have not been able to tell you anything that will be of enough interest for you to get a story out of, but I do hope that it will help you some. I am glad that you came to see me, and come back again.